



# A Twilight Stroll Through

Story and Photos by SSG Alberto Betancourt



Soldiers of the U.S. Army Drill Team spin their rifles in an intricate display during a performance on the Ellipse.

**O**N Wednesdays, as the sun begins to set over the nation's capital, the Army's history unfolds on the Ellipse, in the shadow of the White House and the Washington Monument.

Since April 17 and through Aug. 15, the Twilight Tattoo — an hour-long military pageant featuring members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard); the U.S. Army Band, Pershing's Own; The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps; and the U.S. Army Drill Team — has taken audiences strolling down the Army's "memory lane."

"Along with our musical presentation and performance on the field, we

narrate where the Army has been, what it's doing and where we're going," said Ron McLendon II, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Military District of Washington. "This show depicts the Army's history from its inception to Force XXI."

He said a "tattoo" is a military tradition dating to the early 17th century. The sounding of the bugle signaled soldiers to close down the tavern and return to their quarters. Someone would then "tap to" the keg stoppers.

"Through the years 'tap to' evolved into 'tattoo,' said McLendon. "In the spirit of military tradition, during basic training

'tattoo' is the call to quiet down and for the troops to hit their bunks."

Before the show, soldiers dressed in period uniforms interact with the audience.

"Going out and meeting the public is my favorite part," said SFC William Edward White Jr., who was dressed in a colonial-era uniform. "Most people don't get the opportunity to see the Army's history like this. That's why this show is so special."

McLendon said the show familiarizes the community with the Army's history and traditions, and shows them that the service is about much more than what they see on the prime-time news.

American patriotism has peaked since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, one audience member said. For one hour, surrounded by historical landmarks in the heart of our nation's capital, the Twilight Tattoo performance elevates spirits and leaves audiences with a renewed appreciation for America's Army. □



# Army History



Bewigged and dressed in Colonial-era uniforms, members of The Old Guard's Fife and Drum Corps perform before a cheering crowd.



Soldiers in both modern and period uniforms help illustrate the Army's long and proud history for an appreciative audience.



Younger members of the large crowd, gathered on the Ellipse, dance as the Army Chorale and Chorus performs.



*Twilight Tattoo performances elevate spirits and leave audiences with a renewed appreciation for America's Army.*

With the White House in the background, members of The Old Guard's Salute Battery prepare to fire their guns at the start of the Twilight Tattoo.

*"Twilight Tattoo"*